

TRANSIENT MERCHANTS

Spring and summer mark the beginning of the transient merchant season. Although some door-to-door salespeople are legitimate, many are simply scam artists who misrepresent their product or service and then skip town before authorities can catch them.

The products sold by door-to-door salespeople vary, and the state is visited by people selling everything from cleaning solutions to asphalt paving, to pots and pans and lightning rods.

If a salesperson offers you a deal that sounds too good to be true, it probably is. Often, the prices are inflated, the quality of the product is low, and sometimes what is sold is not what is delivered. An example is cleaning supplies. The salesperson will demonstrate a cleaning solution that works great, but what is delivered is diluted to nothing more than soapy water.

If a person comes to your door offering to sell a product or service, ask to see his or her "transient merchant's license." In most circumstances, except those involving food products, transient salespeople must carry an envelope-sized license issued by the Attorney General's office, and they must also post a bond with the Attorney General's office. This licensing requirement protects you, the consumer. If you have a problem with a transient merchant's product or service, you can file a claim against the bond.

Here are some other ways you can protect yourself from getting ripped off.

- Ask for local references. Get names and telephone numbers of people who have purchased and used the service or product. Call the references to make sure they were satisfied.
- Compare prices with a local, reputable company. Transient merchants often sell at inflated prices. And if you buy locally, you will know where you can find the seller if you have a problem or question.
- Make sure you are getting what you pay for. Inventory the items. Does the produce do what it is supposed to do?

If you do purchase a product at home, North Dakota law says you have three days to cancel the purchase of consumer goods costing \$25 or more. People age 65 or older have 15 business days to cancel home solicitation sales costing more than \$50. A seller must tell you verbally and in writing about these rights to cancel or the deal is voidable.

Do not feel pressured or intimidated by door-to-door salespeople. Your money is at stake. If you are uncomfortable, show the salesperson to the door, get his or her license plate number, and call your local police or county sheriff to report suspicious door-to-door selling.

Don't let the high pressure get to you. A good offer will be there tomorrow if it is legitimate.